

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 NSC-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07
NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 AID-05 COME-00 EB-08
FRB-03 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03 LAB-04 SIL-01
OMB-01 AGRE-00 /069 W
-----017375 171257Z /44

R 161503Z NOV 77
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1732
INFO USIA WASHDC
AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, EG
SUBJECT: NEW WEEKLY NEWSPAPER, AL AHRAR

1. SUMMARY: LONG-AWAITED NEW WEEKLY NEWSPAPER AL AHRAH, MOUTHPIECE OF OPPOSITION LEADER MUSTAPHA KAMEL MURAD AND HIS RIGHTIST PARTY, APPEARED NOVEMBER 14 WITH HARD-HITTING, PROFESSIONALLY-DONE FIRST ISSUE. REMAINS TO BE SEEN IF SUBSEQUENT ISSUES WILL HELP KEEP UP OPPOSITION TONE, AND INJECT RENEWED DIVERSITY INTO CURRENTLY UNIFORM MEDIA SPECTRUM. - END SUMMARY

2. RIGHTIST "LIBERAL SOCIALIST PARTY" HEADED BY PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY OPPOSITION LEADER MUSTAPHA KAMEL MURAD, PUBLISHED FIRST ISSUE OF NEW PARTY NEWSPAPER NOV 14 AFTER MANY MONTHS OF PROMISES IT WOULD DO SO. A WEEKLY PAPER OF 12 PAGES, AL AHRAR (THE LIBERALS) HAS ATTRACTED ATTENTION BY ITS DIRECT ATTACKS ON GOVERNMENT.

3. COTTON SCANDAL. AL AHRAR GAVE BIGGEST FRONT-PAGE HEADLINE TO WHAT IS DESCRIBED AS THE YEAR'S "COTTON CATASTROPHE", PLACED BLAME DIRECTLY ON PRIME MINISTER SALIM AND MINHEALTH BADRAN. PAPER CLAIMED COTTON LOSSES ARE \$112 MILLION AS RESULT LATE
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SPRAYING. SECONDLY, PAPER SAID SPRAYING THAT WAS DONE WAS CARRIED OUT INCORRECTLY RESULTING IN NUMBER OF HUMAN AND ANIMAL DEATHS. (THERE SOME TRUTH TO AL AHRAR'S ALLEGATIONS. FOLLOWING OUTBREAK RIFT VALLEY FEVER, GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN USING SOME MALATHION IN AERIAL SPRAYING AND THERE MAY HAVE BEEN NUMBER FATALITIES.) PAPER ALLEGES GOE HAS HIDDEN FACTS.

4. SALEM: PAPER ALSO ATTACKED PRIME MINISTER SALEM FOR FAILING ACHIEVE BALANCE BETWEEN WAGES AND PRICES AND FOR INEFFECTIVE HOUSING, TRANSPORT, SUPPLY AND AGRICULTURAL POLICIES. PAPER SAID RECENT RESHUFFLE FAILED ADDRESS NATION'S PROBLEMS: IT NO LONGER ACCEPTABLE FOR SAME TEAM BE MOVED AROUND WITHIN CABINET, UTTERING IDENTICAL PROMISES WITH EACH CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT, WHILE PROBLEMS REMAIN UNSOLVED.

5. ASU. PAPER HIT ASU SEC GEN MUSTAFA KHALIL FOR FAILING DISTRIBUTE UMBRELLA ORGANIZATIONS ASSETS EQUITABLY. SAID PARTIES AFRAID RAISE THIS ISSUE PUBLICLY BECAUSE THEY ARE DEPENDENT UPON KHALIL FOR FINANCIAL AND MATERIAL SUPPORT. ACCORDING AL AHRAR, KHALIL CONTROLS 120 MILLION POUNDS WITH LITTLE OR NO PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT.

6. MORE SCANDALS. AL AHRAR CLAIMED CENTER PARTY INSURING THAT FINANCIAL AID GIVEN ONLY TO FRIENDLY STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS. SAID IT HAS DEFINITE INFORMATION CHECKS PASSED TO AT LEAST TWO GROUPS IN CAIRO UNIVERSITY FACULTIES. PAPER SAID PARTY LEADER MUSTAFA KAMAL MURAD UNWILLING LET BOEING CASE GET SWEEPED UNDER RUG AND WILL DEMAND NAMES OF THOSE WHO RECEIVED COMMISSIONS. IF GOVERNMENT REFUSES, MURAD WILL SEEK THIS INFORMATION FROM U.S. CONGRESS. IN SEPARATE ARTICLE, PAPER SAID CHAIRMAN OF SCIENTIFIC ACADEMY GUILTY OF CRIMINAL MISHANDLING OF ACADEMY AFFAIRS.

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7. RALLY. AL AHRAR DEVOTED ALL OF PAGE 3 TO RECENT RALLY HELD BY PARTY LEADER MURAD IN DESOUQ, CLAIMING IT ATTENDED BY MORE THAN 40,000. (MURAD TOLD PAO NOV 11 THIS WAS BEST TURNOUT HE HAD RECEIVED, AND HE PLANS TO TRY TO REPEAT PERFORMANCE ON WEEKLY BASIS THROUGHOUT COUNTRY, GIVING PAPER GOOD EVENT TO COVER. HE REPEATED CLAIM MADE TO EMBOFFS BEFORE, THAT HIS PARTY'S RALLIES HAVE GONE UNREPORTED IN ASU-CONTROLLED PRESS)

8. CENTER PARTY WEEKLY "GARIDIT MASR" IN NOVEMBER 15 ISSUE RESPONDED DEFENSIVELY TO AHRAR STORY ON COTTON (PARA. 2), SAYING COTTON PRODUCTION DECLINE CAUSED BY UNEXPECTED BAD WEATHER. PAPER ASSERTED THAT ACCUSATION OF MISHANDLING OF SEEDS AND PESTICIDES WAS A LIE.

9. PAPER'S STAFF. AL AHRAR RAN INTO NUMEROUS DIFFICULTIES, INCLUDING STAFFING, ON WAY TO ITS FIRST ISSUE. BEST JOURNALISTS HESITATED TO LEAVE SECURE JOBS FOR RISKY VENTURE. MURAD TOLD AMBASSADOR RECENTLY HE HAS HAD TO APPEAL DIRECTLY TO PRESIDENT SADAT FOR HELP IN HIS RECRUITING EFFORTS. BOARD CHAIRMAN IS ALI EL-FOWLY, A FORMER MENA BUREAU CHIEF IN BEIRUT AND BAGHDAD. EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, SALAH QABADAYA, 40, FORMERLY DEPUTY EDITOR-IN-CHIEF AT AL AKHBAR, IS KNOWN FOR DEFT, SARCASTIC WRITING STYLE. IN 1976, AS AKHBAR MILITARY REPORTER, HE ATTENDED

JOURNALISM SEMINAR AT INDIANA UNIVERSITY UNDER IV GRANT AND
AFTERWARDS WROTE UPBEAT ARTICLES ABOUT THE U.S. HE HAS WRITTEN 5 BOOK
S
ON EGYPTIAN MILITARY AFFAIRS. MANAGING EDITOR IS MOHAMMED
EL-GHALBAN, A FORMER DESK MAN AT AL GOMHOURIYA.

10. CIRCULATION. MURAD TOLD PAO CIRCULATION WILL BE 90-100,000
COPIES, AND THAT HE WILL BUILD OWN PLANT TO HANDLE PRINTING
AND DISTRIBUTION, CURRENTLY DONE FOR PAPER BY EXISTING AKHBAR
AL YAWM PUBLISHING HOUSE, LAYOUT OF PAPER, BY ONE OF EGYPT'S BEST
TECHNICAL DIRECTORS, HAS ALREADY DRAWN PRAISE FROM PROFESSIONAL
JOURNALISTS

11. COMMENT. IF EDITORIAL TONE AND NEWS SELECTION CONTINUE IN
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SUBSEQUENT ISSUES TO BE AS FEISTY AND COMBATIVE AS FIRST ONE,
PHASE OF PARTICULARLY BLAND UNIFORMITY AND DULLNESS THAT HAS
CHARACTERIZED EGYPTIAN PRESS SINCE SPRING 1977 WILL BE OVER.
TRUE OPPOSITION VOICES HAVE NOT BEEN HEARD IN MEDIA SINCE
DISAPPEARANCE OF TALIA, TAMING OF ROSE AL YUSEF AND ENDING
OF SHORT-LIVED TV ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS, ALL AFTER JANUARY
RIOTS. INMUALITY OF JOURNALISM AND IN APPEARANCE, AL AHRAR
CLEARLY OUTCLASSES EXISTING CENTER PARTY WEEKLY. COMING MONTHS,
IN WHICH NEW LEFTIST WEEKLY AND NEW PRESS LAW ARE ANTICIPATED,
WILL SHOW WHETHER AHRA IS FIRST STEP TO INCREASINGLY OPEN MEDIA
DEBATE ON ISSUES.
EILTS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: NEWSPAPERS, ESTABLISHMENT OF OFFICES
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770426-0113
Format: TEL
From: CAIRO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19771154/aaaabtsw.tel
Line Count: 148
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
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Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
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Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 573283
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NEW WEEKLY NEWSPAPER, AL AHRAR
TAGS: PINT, SOPN, EG
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/bc703819-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009